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Norman Ross

Viet War Serves As a Stopper on The 'Brain Drain'

In its excellent current issue totally devoted to the effect of the Vietnam war on American life, Newsweek magazine asks:

"For all its righteous pretensions, has America in fact stumbled into the discredited imperialist role? Are Americans henceforth doomed to fight the kind of distant, painful wars the British waged against the intractable Boers half a century ago?"

Certainly it is not news that many foreigners think the answer to both these questions is a firm "Yes."

But there is interesting evidence that the much-publicized "brain drain" that is bringing top-flight scientists and technicians to the United States from all over the world would be even more extensive were it not for our involvement in Vietnam and what it portends for the future.



Ross

has had it."

We had joked that I had come farther than anyone else to attend our Oxford reunion not because I wanted to see old friends but because the CIA had commissioned me to lure bright young Englishmen to our shores.

BUT WHEN I ASKED if he planned to come to the States, his answer was most interesting:

"We're sending you plenty of doctors, but I won't be one of them. Most who do go are Indians and Pakistanis and the like.

"They use us as a way-station, then pack off for America. We teach them some English, civilize them a bit and off they go to you. A lot of them are bloody awful, too, the dregs."

"Why won't you come?" I persisted.

"I'd be there like a shot," he answered, "and so would lots of others. But you know why I won't? Because I don't want my two young sons to fight in Asia.

"And the way it looks, that's what you'll be doing, in a whole string of Vietnams, for the next generation."

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SOMEBODY HAS TO KNOCK the Chinese on the knuckles every time they reach out, directly or by proxy, for the territory of others," I said. "The hope is that, if we can contain Mao and his coterie, someday their successors may be a bit more willing to coexist with the rest of the world.

"There's some evidence that the Soviets are beginning to mellow a bit. If we don't slow the Chinese, one of these days your grandsons may be fighting them as our sons now are, and a lot closer to you than Vietnam. Didn't the Mongols reach the gates of Vienna?"

HE THOUGHT FOR A moment, then replied: "I don't care so much about my unborn grandsons just yet. But I am concerned about my sons. That's why I'll go to Canada for 4 times what I'm making right now, though I could go to the United States for maybe 10 times as much. They tell me that, as a surgeon, I could make \$60,000 a year there."

Considering his skill as a surgeon, he probably could, too. And his Oxbridge accent and Savile Row tailoring would add to his bedside manner.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 young doctors seek admittance to the United States each year. About 4,000 of them make it, and many stay to practice medicine.

About one-third of Britain's medical graduates leave their country annually, and since fewer students go into training, and the supply of Pakistanis and Indians is decreasing, Britain's National Health Service is endangered.

MONEY IS, OF COURSE, a major factor. British interns average a 100-hour work week, yet earn less than \$200 a month, which figures out to only 45 cents an hour. So \$60,000 a year would be more than tempting.

Also important is the fact that the United States offers unmatched scope for research and practice to aggressive and imaginative young doctors.

Consider three startling statistics from the American Medical Assn.:

• Since the end of World War II more Americans have won the Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology than have their confreres from all other countries combined.

• In the same period, well over half of all major drug discoveries were made here.

• At a time when we were building 750 new hospitals, Britain was building only ONE!

Without such things as the brake provided by fear of having to fight endless "white man's burden" wars, one wonders if the worrisome "brain drain" might not become a flood.